

AND FAITH UNFEIGNED.—I TIM. 1: 15.

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Paul had left Timothy at Ephesus for a set purpose and with a definite charge. There were at that time special evils into which the church was in danger of falling. Among other things, he mentions the tendency to teach a different doctrine, and giving time and attention to fables and long genealogies that could only end in questionings rather than strengthen faith. Men, in some way at least, though often very narrow, are inclined to be quite liberal in their thinking and investigation, and are ready to give equal thought and place to whatever theory or notion may come into their way, that they give to the word of God. In short they provoke questionings and cultivate doubt instead of implanting strong, firm faith. We are apt to be entrapped by the very common phrase, "Honest doubt," or "I'm an honest doubter." C. H. Spurgeon says, "A great poet let fall the expression honest doubt." How greedily it was clutched at! Modern unbelief is so short of the quality that it seized upon the label, and in season and out of season it has advertised itself as *honest* doubt. It was in dire need of a character. Feeble as our voice may be, we will lift it in favor of *honest faith*. I find written in my own hand in the margin of the page, "I'll do it too. J. M. B. Oct. 1, 1891." I remember well how I was taken by his sturdy defense of the faith of Christ and under the spell I just registered that vow and signed name and dated the note. I clearly remember too how, when looking through the book and seeing the note, I was really startled at my own boldness; but after all I said, "Surely that is the right thing to do," and from that time on I have been seeking for, and trying to encourage *honest faith* and letting doubt and questionings take care of themselves and I find that they don't do nearly so well as when I try to help them.

There is much talk at present about the study of "Comparative Religions," in which false teachings are put on the same level with the word of God, for investigation, and heathen and infidels are placed along beside the Lord Jesus Christ. Great business for Christian men

to be at! Why the heathen themselves do that much honor to God! At Athens Paul found, along with their many altars, one to the unknown God, but he did not begin to draw a comparison of what they thought to be separate gods. The Philistines, when they had taken the ark of the Lord immediately took it to Ashdod to the house of Dagon, their national god, and set it by Dagon. We might easily expect that God would be displeased to have Israel bring Dagon and set it by the ark and thus honor Dagon; but He is very highly displeased at the Philistines' trying to honor Him by setting the ark along with their idol. Look at the result. The "Cry of the city went up to heaven" because of the suffering and death sent upon them out of the wrath and anger of God at such presumption. I wonder how he likes this modern "Dagon business" of holding congresses of religions and professed Christians delving into the koran or the teachings of Buddha with the same zeal and earnestness that they manifest in searching his everlasting word. If He punished heathens for such work to such an extent that they sought every possible means to get rid of the ark, what will He do with those who profess to be His children and yet do the same thing.

I am sure that Paul saw and felt this danger and hence, charged Timothy to teach unfeigned faith at Ephesus, and then so deeply feels the need of it that he must repeat the charge at the very beginning of his first letter to him. Paul though does not say to this preacher, "Thou shalt diligently study the gnostic theory and meditate upon it that thou mayest be able to answer every question and know all the puzzles and get into the jangle with these unbelievers and thus lead the church and these into strong faith in God;" but he does say, "This charge I commit unto thee, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before thee, that by them thou mayest war a good warfare; holding faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust from them made shipwreck of the faith." I Tim. 1: 18, 19. "For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all; the testimony to be born in its own

time. I Tim. 2: 5, 6. Many other directions are given but in all, Timothy is firmly held to the one God and the one mediator between God and man, and urged to think and meditate upon this and to give wholly to it. Paul sternly holds to his faith in the one God and the one Redeemer and revealer of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and knows that no one will care anything about the questioning of the philosopher, or the doubts of the infidel, or the claims of Mohammedans when they see face to face the Son of God surrounded by the "shining hosts of heaven."

But why unfeigned faith? Did men then too *pretend* faith in Christ? The question goes without asking, and the answer follows close at its heels. There always have been pretenders. Hypocrisy has budded and bloomed and produced its blight and poison in all ages. There is much talk of hypocrites being in the church but they are everywhere. Really fewer pretenders in the church, comparatively, than outside of it, I think I am safe in saying. Dante knew of them and boldly assigns them places deep down in hell in the very heart of the city of Dis. To be sure the "Christian hypocrite" has his special place with its appropriate surroundings and means of punishment. And the heathen and infidel fraud, and pretenders of all sorts are found in their "bag" or "ditch" and some of them are tortured by demons of the most horrid kind. Pretending is always hateful and ruinous. There were those who merely professed to believe in Christ even in Paul's time when the line between the church and the world was clear cut and sharply drawn; and professing faith in Christ brought men into danger of receiving the most cruel treatment, and exile, and even death. Not expecting to find many pretending faith in Jesus at such a time, and yet then there was need that Timothy stay at Ephesus and teach unpretended faith. If there was pretension then much more may we expect it now. It is not unpopular generally to be known as a Christian. It is gain to many rather than loss, even in the estimation of the world. And by the way it is very often used as a means of gain by many. Can't we *really believe* in Jesus?